

1968
LIST 43

FIREHOUSE ENGINE CO. THIRTY-THREE, 44 Great Jones Street, Borough of Manhattan. Completed 1893; architects Ernest Flagg and W. B. Chambers.

Landmark Site: Borough of Manhattan Tax Map Block 531, Lot 49.

On December 13, 1966, the Landmarks Preservation Commission held a public hearing on the proposed designation as a Landmark of the Firehouse Engine Co. Thirty-Three and the proposed designation of the related Landmark Site. (Item No. 14). The hearing had been duly advertised in accordance with the provisions of law. Two witnesses spoke in favor of designation, and a letter has been received from the Hon. Robert O. Lowery, Fire Commissioner. There were no speakers in opposition to designation.

DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS

Dominated by a graceful arch, monumental in scale, this late Nineteenth Century Firehouse is a striking example of the French Beaux Arts style of architecture. A daring design in its day, the impressive facade contains a number of elements which are strongly influenced by the French architectural style of Louis XV. This utilitarian building has a flamboyance that is particularly appropriate to the function of the hazardous profession engaged in by its occupants. Four stories high with its brick and stone structure and various interesting forms, materials and color, it is an exceptionally distinguished public building.

The large central arch, rising from a strong rusticated stone base, contains an elegantly carved keystone above a cartouche, within the deep concave stone surrounds. Grouped together within this wide arch, and arising through three floors, are four windows at each level arranged into a highly pleasing composition. The tall French windows on the second and fourth floors are enhanced by decorative metal railings. Particularly handsome is the ornate design of free flowing curves at the second floor railing which, in part, rests on a narrow balcony projecting forward from the center of the building. Augmenting this composition is an elaborately decorated pediment above the third floor windows. Two large vehicular doors on the ground floor have three centered arches of graceful proportions. Crowning this structure is a very deep metal roof cornice ornamented with antefixae, fleur-de-lis and other classic forms. It is supported on large scroll type brackets of unusually good design, set in pairs.

The New York City Fire Department had its origin in the Dutch settlement of New Amsterdam when the first fire ordinance was adopted by the settlers in 1648, under the administration of Governor Stuyvesant. This ordinance established a fire watch of eight men. The first paid company, Metropolitan Engine No. 1., went into service on July 31, 1865 at No. 4 Centre Street. For two hundred and eight years before 1865, the fire force consisted of volunteers, with a great tradition of their own. From this modest beginning the New York Fire Department has grown to 367 companies with over 13,000 uniformed firemen. Fire Engine Company No. Thirty-Three is but one of the 280 fire houses in the five boroughs of the City.

FINDINGS AND DESIGNATIONS

On the basis of a careful consideration of the history, the architecture and other features of this building, the Landmarks Preservation Commission finds that the Firehouse Engine Co. Thirty-Three has a special character, special historical and aesthetic interest and value as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of New York City.

The Commission further finds that, among its important qualities, Firehouse Engine Co. Thirty-Three is a distinguished example of French Beaux Arts architecture, that it is colorful in appearance, possesses superb architectural details arranged in a highly successful composition, that these elements were boldly combined and that the building, as executed, was considered architecturally daring in its day.

Accordingly, pursuant to the provisions of Chapter 63 of the Charter of the City of New York and Chapter 8-A of the Administrative Code of the City of New York, the Landmarks Preservation Commission designates as a Landmark the Firehouse Engine Co. Thirty-Three, 44 Great Jones Street, Borough of Manhattan and designates Tax Map Block 531, Lot 49, Borough of Manhattan as its Landmark Site.

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